5. FIVESTRIPED SQUIRREL *FUNAMBULUS PENNANTI* (WROUGHTON) FEEDING ON FLEDGELING HOUSE SPARROW *PASSER DOMESTICUS*

Fivestriped squirrel *Funambulus pennanti* (Wroughton) is mainly a seed eater (Barnett and Prakash 1975, Sood and Dilber 1978, Agarwal and Dalela 1983, Prater 1988). Its dental pattern with well developed incisors is adapted for nibbling seeds/kernels.

On the morning of 2nd June 1994 at around 0840 h in the residential area of Millet Research Station, Gujarat Agricultural University, Jamnagar we were surprised to see a fivestriped squirrel pouncing on a sparrow which was sitting on the ground. Before it was caught by the squirrel, the sparrow which was originally resting on the ground made a short flight and landed about 0.5 m away. At once the squirrel followed and pounced on the sparrow. This incident was observed from about 15 m. The sparrow did not make any sound while it was caught because it was tightly caught by the head. Soon, the squirrel took its prey near to a wall situated 1.0 m away and started gnawing on it. After about two minutes we went to the site for confirmation. Seeing us moving the squirrel left its prey and ran away. The prey was a fledgeling house sparrow which looked a little too young to leave its nest. The fledgeling must have ventured out from its nest before developing its flight potential fully.

The inability of the fledgeling to fly away to safer place as well as its inexperience and ignorance about the predators around had given the squirrel an easy chance to catch it.

A close examination of the carcass revealed that the fledgeling was eaten from its lower bill. We stood away waiting for the squirrel to come and take its prey, but it did not return. So it appears that birds are not a very preferred food item to the squirrel. Later, the carcass was taken away by a house crow.

Although the fivestriped squirrel is largely granivorous rodent it has been reported to feed on insects (Krishnaswamy and Chowhan 1956). Very recently, this species of squirrel has been reported to kill and feed on redvented bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer* and also to kill whitecheeked bulbul *Pycnonotus leucogenys* and house sparrow *Passer domesticus* (Tiwari 1990). The squirrel can now be considered as a predator of fledgelings/ nestlings of the house sparrow.

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6. SOME NOTES ON THE FRUITS, SEEDS AND NECTAR CONSUMED BY THREE STRIPED PALM SQUIRREL *FUNAMBULUS PALMARUM* AT POINT CALIMERE WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, TAMIL NADU

The food of three striped palm squirrel *Funambulus palmarum* includes fruits, nuts, young shoots, buds and bark. Nectar and insects are also consumed to some extent (Prater 1980). Balasubramanian (1989) described the nectar feeding behaviour of three striped palm squirrel and its possible role in the pollination of its food plant *Rivea hypocrateriformis.*

While making observations on the plant-animal interactions at Point Calimere Wildlife Sanctuary, I could observe the three stiped palm squirrel visiting various plant species to feed on the fruits, seeds, and nectar. Altogether 50 plant species were visited by this animal (Appendix 1).

In many of the observed cases the squirrels visited

Appendix 1

LIST OF FOOD PLANTS OF THREESTRIPED PALM SQUIRREL IN POINT CALIMERE WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Plant Species	Family	Parts eaten
Pachygone ovata (Poiret) Hook.f. & Thom.	Menispermaceae	Seed
Capparis zeylanica L.	Capparidaceae	Fruit
Crateva adansonii DC.	Capparidaceae	Fruit
Flacourtia indica (Burm. f.) Merr.	Flacourtiaceae	Fruit
Hygonia mystax L.	Linaceae	Seed
Glycosmis pentaphylla (Retz.) DC.	Rutaceae	Seed
Toddalia asiatica (L.) Lam.	Rutaceae	Seed
Ochna obtusata DC.	Ochnaceae	Fruit
Azadirachta indica (Adr. Juss.) Harms.	Meliaceae	Seed
Walsura trifolia (Adr. Juss.) Harms.	Meliaceae	Seed
Olax scandens Roxb.	Olacaceae	Seed
Pleurostylia opposita (Wallich.) Alston	Hippocrateaceae	Seed
Scutia myrtina (Burm.f.) Kurz.	Rhamnaceae	Seed
Zizyphus mauritiana Lam.	Rhamnaceae	Seed
Zizyphus oenoplia (L.) Miller	Rhamnaceae	Seed
Lepisanthes tetraphylla (Vahl) Radlk.	Sapindaceae	Fruit
Sapindus emarginata Vahl	Sapindaceae	Fruit
Lannea coromandelica (Houtt.) Merr.	Anacardiaceae	Seed
Pongamia pinnata (L.) Pierre.	Papilionaceae	Seed
Cassia fistula L.	Caesalpiniaceae	Pulp
Pithecellobium dulce (Roxb.) Benth.	Mimosaceae	Aril
Prosopis chilensis (Molina) S.	Mimosaceae	Pulp
Syzygium cumini (L.) Skeels	Myrtaceae	Seed
Trichosanthes tricuspidata Lour.	Cucurbitaceae	Fruit
Opuntia dillenni (Ker.-Gawl.) Haw.	Cactaceae	Fruit
Canthium dicoccum (Gaer.) Teijsm & Binnend	Rubiaceae	Seed
Canthium parviflorum Lam.	Rubiaceae	Seed
Catunaregam spinosa (Thunb.) Tirvengadam	Rubiaceae	Fruit
Ixora pavetta Andrews	Rubiaceae	Fruit
Manilkara hexandra (Roxb.) Dubbard.	Sapotaceae	Fruit
Mimusops elengi L.	Sapotaceae	Fruit
Jasminum angustifolium Vahl	Oleaceae	Seed
Jasminum auriculatum Vahl	Oleaceae	Seed
Azima tetracantha Lam.	Salvadoraceae	Fruit
Salvadora persica L.	Salvadoraceae	Seed
Carissa spinarum L. Mant.	Apocynaceae	Fruit
Cordia obliqua Willd.	Cordiaceae	Fruit
Ehretia ovalifolia Wt.	Cordiaceae	Fruit
Rivea hypocrateriformis Desr. Choisy	Convolvulaceae	Seed
Gmelina asiatica L.	Verbenaceae	Seed
Viscum orientale Willd.	Viscaceae	Fruit
Drypetes sepiaria (W. & A.) Pax & Hoffm.	Euphorbiaceae	Seed
Securinega leucopyrus (Willd.) Muell.	Euphorbiaceae	Fruit
Plecospermum spinosum Trecul	Moraceae	Seed
Ficus benghalensis L.	Moraceae	Fruit
Ficus microcarpa L.f.	Moraceae	Fruit
Ficus religiosa L.	Moraceae	Fruit
Ficus tsjakela N. Burman	Moraceae	Fruit
Dactyloctenium aegyptium (L.) P. Beauv.	Gramineae	Grain
Trachys muricata (L.) Pers. ex Trin.	Gramineae	Grain

the plants to eat the seeds. Usually, the squirrels gnaw the pericarp of the fruits and eat the cotyledons. Whenever fruits with smaller seeds are encountered the whole fruit was eaten. In the case of *Cassia fistula* and *Prosopis chilensis* which possess pods, the pulp was eaten and seeds were discarded. The squirrel visited the flowers of *Rivea hypocrateriformis* and *Catunaregam spinosa (=Randia dumetorum),* to feed on nectar. From the observations it is inferred that, this squirrel appears to have a significant role to play in the pollination of its food plants whose flowers it visited, but does not have a definite role in the dispersal of seeds of its food plants.

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7. SIGHTING OF SPINY DORMOUSE *PLATACANTHOMYS LASIURUS* BLYTH, 1859 IN PEPPARA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, TRIVANDRUM DISTRICT, KERALA

The Peppara Wildlife Sanctuary is situated at the South West end of the Western Ghats in Trivandrum District, Kerala State (8° 7' and 8° 53' N, 76° 40' and 77° 17' E, the altitude varies from 197 m to 1,363 m). The vegetation of the sanctuary consists of moist deciduous, semi evergreen and evergreen forests.

During the study on crop damage by wild animals in the Kani tribal settlements, the skin of a Spiny Dormouse *Platacanthomys lasiurus* Blyth 1859 was found in the Chemmankala kani settlement. The Spiny Dormouse is locally known "Mutteli". Ellerman and Morrison-Scott (1951) and Ellerman (1961) have reported the occurrence of these species from the near by Bonaccord area. Rajagopalan (1968) reported this species from Shimoga in Karnataka State. Apart from this no information is available on this species.

In the subsequent field surveys carried out in the Peppara Wildlife Sanctuary, three specimens of this species were collected and their habitat was studied.

Kani tribals used to catch these animals from the nearby forests, when they need them for medicinal purposes. They identify the nests of these animals by watching the water oozing out of the holds on trees. For catching them, they either cut open the trees or blow smoke into the holes. The tribals believe that the flesh and spines of this species are a cure for respiratory diseases.

External measurements of the two specimens were:

	Subadult male (cm)	Subadult female (cm)
Head and body	11.5	13.00
Tail (with hair)	12.5 (9.5)	13.00 (9.5)
Left hind paw	2.5	2.5
Left ear	2.0	2.5

Our observation on the species revealed that it lived in colonies on live trees. The nests were found on *Terminalia bellerica, T. paniculata, Persea macrantha, Dillenia retusa* and *Careya arborea.* The animals were fed on Pepper (*Piper nigrum*), Cashewnut (*Anacardium occidentale*) and Cassava (*Manihot utilissima*). To some extent they are considered as pests of the above species.

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